

# ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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## The Cold River

### General Description of the Cold River

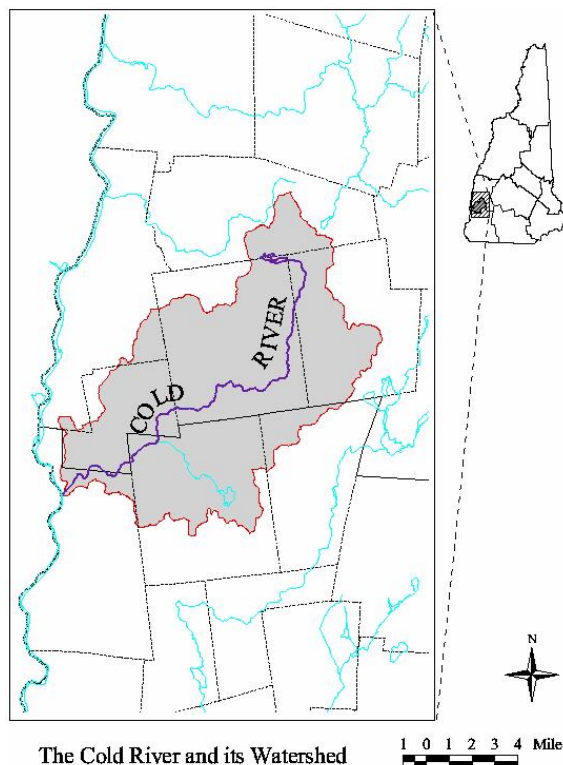
The headwaters of the Cold River are nestled in the hills of Acworth and Unity at Crescent Lake. Along the Cold River's 23.5 mile course it drops nearly 980 feet through a mostly rural landscape interspersed with small villages which contribute to the river's vitality and uniqueness. The Cold River's inaugural plunge from the east side of Crescent Lake lacks the grandeur of the animated river the Cold is known to be, but soon after leaving the lake the stream is joined by several tributaries and more than doubles in size.

### Natural Beauty

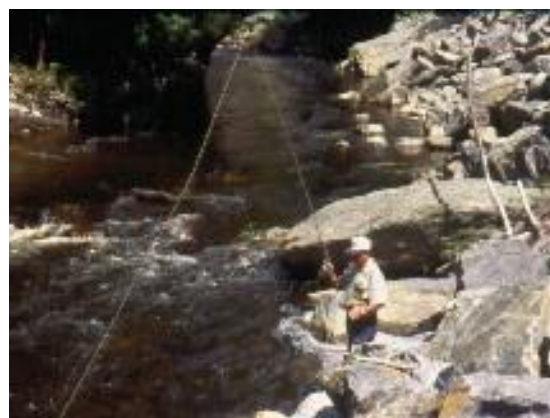
The river's character changes little as it works its way through several marshes and woodland areas, but when it reaches South Acworth the river valley becomes steep and narrow as it prepares to plunge 60 feet in 0.2 miles over two significant waterfalls. The first fall resides just after a breached millpond dam at Beryl Mountain Road, while the second pours between two pillars of rock into a formation known as Deep Hole. After Deep Hole, until its confluence with the Connecticut River, the average gradient of the Cold River is 40 feet/mile. From there it passes under McDermott Covered Bridge and enters Vilas Pool, an impoundment at the head of a small gorge. The river broadens as it leaves the gorge and enters the town of Alstead. After several miles the valley walls close once again as the Cold River rushes into Drewsville Gorge where cliffs rising 25 feet from the river's edge surround several waterfalls. Below the gorge, the Cold River scoops up deep deposits of sand and gravel which are deposited in a large sand bar as the river finally sweeps into the larger and slower [Connecticut River](#).

### History

The history of the Cold River is as intriguing to historians as the lure of the rapids is to kayakers. From a time 500 million years ago, when New Hampshire is thought to have been under a sea bound by a continent to the west and a volcanic island arc to the east, to a period more recently when the Native Abenaki people lived in the Cold and Connecticut River Valleys and made encampments along the river during the fishing season, activity has been abundant along the Cold River.



The Cold River and its Watershed



For many years the area was an industrial center housing mills which processed trees, wool, corn, grain, apples and clay into products to be shipped by rail to population centers. Though none of the mills remain, several footings of buildings show their location and mark the size of the operations that attracted many people to the area.

Throughout the river corridor, stone bridges span small tributaries and stone walls continue to guard the livestock and agriculture of long overgrown fields. The McDermott Covered Bridge, spanning the Cold River in the town of Langdon, is listed on the National Register of Historic places. Whether paddling down the river, hiking along its banks or swimming in its cold waters, one cannot overlook the astounding history of the region which calls from the past and continues to influence the future.

### **Recreation**

The Cold River is recognized as a stimulating river for both novice and expert paddlers. Canoeists and kayakers will find Class II and III rapids for running during spring high water. With the Cold River's steep banks, swift current, and the region's severe winters, the river's natural flow dynamics ensure that one year's run will never duplicate another. The Cold River has been called a "flashy but unpredictable river to set into."

In winter the river sometimes serves as a flat run for cross country skiers and snowmobilers, while the steep rock faces provide the more adventurous souls with an expanse of exhilarating ice climbing. The Cold River also boasts many pristine swimming holes. Venturing out of the river corridor, a person will find several hiking trails meandering close to fallen stonewalls and foundations, whispering reminders of time gone by.

### **Fishing**

Roadside put-ins and bridges along with wooded and wetland areas make the Cold River a favorite fishery for cold water anglers. The many pools and undercuts of the river provide an ideal nursery for juvenile Atlantic salmon and protective cover for trout. The significance of the Cold River as an important rearing habitat for juvenile Atlantic salmon was noted in October of 1995 when *The Silvio O. Conte National Fish & Wildlife Refuge Final Action Plan & Environmental Impact Statement* identified the Cold River as one of 38 high priority areas in the [Connecticut River](#) watershed.

### **Wildlife Habitat and Uncommon Vegetation**

Due to the steep sloped topography and narrow roads of the Cold River watershed, the area has been largely untouched by modern influences, which makes the region excellent habitat for numerous wild animals. Residents along the river often report sightings of wild turkeys, mossback snapping turtles, and weasels. In the wetlands surrounding the river, canoeists can view herons, and numerous other waterfowl, along with moose, deer, otters and beavers. The wetland areas are also home to balsam fir, a rarity in Southern New Hampshire, and alder thickets that provide excellent habitat for scores of wildlife. The nationally listed endangered bald eagle and peregrine falcon have been sighted at the mouth of the river along with many other raptors such as the Cooper's hawk and osprey, both of which are listed as threatened species. Visitors to the Cold River watershed are more likely to spot a moose than a fast food restaurant during their stay.

### **For More Information**

For further information about the N.H. Rivers Management and Protection Program go to <http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/rivers/index.htm> or contact Steve Couture, Rivers Coordinator, 29 Hazen Drive, PO Box 95, Concord, NH 03302-0095; (603) 271-8801; [steven.couture@des.nh.gov](mailto:steven.couture@des.nh.gov).